

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of the above-identified application is requested in view of the following remarks.

As set forth above, Claims 1, 10, 16 and 19 have been amended. Claims 20-23 are newly added. Thus, Claims 1, 4, 5 and 7-23 are pending, with Claims 1, 10, 16 and 19 being independent.

The Official Action rejects Claims 1, 4 and 6-19 as being anticipated by *Abe* (U.S. Patent No. 6,894,792), hereinafter *Abe*.

The priority date of the present application predates the priority date of *Abe*, thereby removing *Abe* as prior art under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b). That is, the present application claims priority to Japanese Patent Application H10-16098 which was filed on January 28, 1998 in Japan and *Abe* was filed on December 4, 1998 in the United States. A verified English translation of the Japanese Patent Application H10-16098 is attached herewith and provides support for all the subject matter defined by Claims 1-19, but not Claim 20-23.

It is therefore requested that the rejections be withdrawn and that this application be allowed.


In the event that there are any questions concerning this response, or the application in general, the Examiner is respectfully urged to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution of the application may be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,

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(INCLUDING ATTORNEYS FROM BURNS DOANE SWECKER & MATHIS)

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